

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 7, 13 and 19; and add new Claims 28-30, as indicated below. The status of all pending claims is as follows:

1-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing a program to cause a computer to perform message-address management processing in a system capable of exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, wherein the program causes a server computer to perform:

when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

determining, from a plurality of provided message address lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address list, wherein the rest of the members includes members with message addresses that have not been changed;

determining domain information associated with each of the rest of the members of the determined message list;

specifying a server, based upon the determined domain information, to which the absence response information is to be provided; and

distributing the absence response information to the specified server or servers,
wherein a server receiving said the absence response information from the client also performs the step of distributing the absence response information.

8. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

9. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

10-12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) A message-address management method for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the method comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of message address lists of message exchanging groups;

receiving, when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group changes, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member;

determining, from the plurality of stored message address lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address list, wherein the rest of the members includes members with message addresses that have not been changed;

specifying one or more servers, based upon domain information of the extracted address or addresses, to which the absence response information is to be provided; and

distributing the absence response information to the one or more specified servers,

wherein a server receiving said the absence response information from the client also performs the step of distributing the absence response information.

14. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

15. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein during the absence-response-information distribution step, a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

16-18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) A message-address management apparatus for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the apparatus comprising:

means for storing a plurality of message address lists of message exchanging groups;

when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

means for determining, from a plurality of message address lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member;

means for extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address list;

means for determining domain information associated with each of the rest of the members of the determined message address list;

means for specifying a server, or servers, based upon the determined domain information, to which the absence response information is to be provided; and

means for distributing the absence response information to the specified server or servers,

wherein a server receiving said the absence response information from the client is said means for distributing the absence response information.

20. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information received contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

21. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution by the means for distributing.

22-24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.

26. (Previously Presented) A message address management method according to claim 13, wherein the distributing step includes distributing the absence response information to a mail server administrator if the information includes a flag indicating that the absence response information should be provided to the mail server administrator.

27. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.

28. (New) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein said message address list of a message exchanging group is a database of message addresses that exchange messages with each other.

29. (New) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein said message address list of a message exchanging group is a database of message addresses that exchange messages with each other.

30. (New) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said message address list of a message exchanging group is a database of message addresses that exchange messages with each other.